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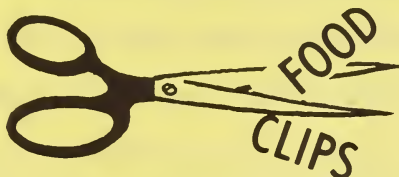
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# Food and Home Notes

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
OFFICE OF COMMUNICATION WASHINGTON, D. C.

November 18, 1974



## In This Issue

- 1 On Soil Surveys
- 2/3 Check Condensation  
--In Your Home
- 4 A Living Tree  
--For Christmas

If you must cook pasta ahead of meal-time keep it hot in a strainer over hot water. The steam will reduce sticking.

\* \* \*

Need buttermilk for a recipe -- and none available? Use home-soured whole milk instead. For each cup of sweet milk combine a tablespoon of vinegar or lemon juice with enough sweet milk to make one cup of liquid. Let it stand 5 minutes before you use it suggests home economists from USDA.

\* \* \*

When thickening milk mixtures with flour or cornstarch -- remember that they need constant stirring during cooking to prevent lumping.

\* \* \*

If you do not need to rely on fortified milk as a principal source of vitamin D (you get it from other sources) you can purchase fresh milk without the added vitamins and minerals...there might be a saving.

\* \* \*

"Grade B" frozen strawberries? Are usually less colorful than grade A.

## Soil Surveys ---and YOU

People are not alike -- and neither are soils! Homebuyers and developers of land can benefit by understanding about the soil-related hazards or limitations that affect home sites.

Soils may...be seasonably wet or subject to flooding. They may...be shallow to bedrock...too unstable to be used as a foundation for building or roads...or too poorly suited to septic tank absorption fields. These soil properties and many others that affect land use are given in soil surveys.

Soil properties are a major consideration in selecting and planting trees, shrubs and grasses for beautification and erosion control. Land suitable for developing recreational facilities can be selected through the use of soil surveys. You can call the local office of the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) to determine whether a soil survey of the area that interests you is available. SCS is listed in your telephone directory under the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

## CONDENSATION ---and Your Home

Condensation is the change in moisture from a vapor to a liquid. If your home is not properly protected from condensation caused by high humidities it can result in excessive maintenance costs, according to research by the Forest Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Actually, the cost of heat losses, painting and redecorating, and excessive maintenance and repair caused by cold weather condensation can be easily reduced or eliminated when proper construction techniques are used. The time to act on preventing condensation problems is during construction of the house -- specify and check details with the building plans.

The most easily prevented problem of moisture is caused by the movement of water vapor through walls or ceiling, but properly installed vapor barriers, in conjunction with the proper use of insulation, and adequate ventilation will avoid most of these difficulties.

Estimates have been made that a typical family of four converts three gallons of water into water vapor per day. Unless this excess water vapor is properly removed in some way (ventilation usually), it will either increase the humidity or condense on cold surfaces such as window glass. The movement of water through the construction of the house -- wall, roof, or floor cavities -- is far more serious, however.

A tremendous amount of water is used during the construction of a home. The basement floors, concrete walls, and plastered walls all require the use of water. A concrete floor in the basement contains more than 240 gallons of water when it is poured. The walls contain over 480 gallons of water. These are some of the reasons behind having a newly built house heated and completely ventilated before moving in to reduce the contained amount of water.

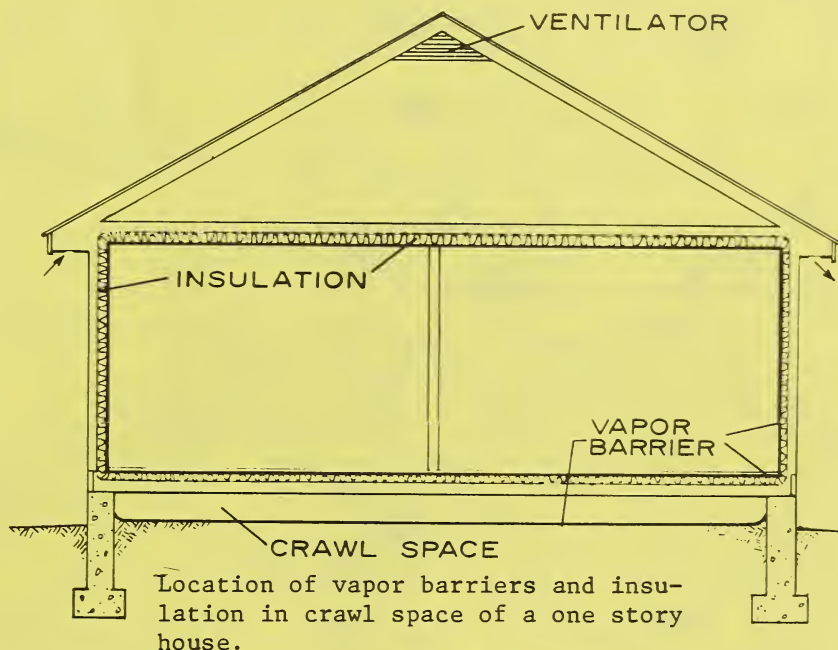


## CONDENSATION

Visible condensation on glass surfaces, attic areas and crawl spaces must be considered first. If your house is built on a concrete slab without radiant heat it is sometimes subjected to surface condensation if warm humid air enters the house.

Condensation, occurs when the temperature drops below dewpoint. In cold weather, this means frost, which can cause staining of siding and peeling of the paint and possibly decay. Several methods may be used to correct this problem:

1. Reduce relative humidity within the house.
2. Add a vapor-resistant paint coating (such as aluminum paint to the interior of walls and ceilings).
3. Improve the vapor resistance of ceiling by adding a vapor barrier between ceiling joints.
4. Improve attic ventilation.



As a result of many years of research on condensation problems by the Forest Products Laboratory of USDA, a new publication called "Condensation Problems in Your House: Prevention and Solution" has been published. It is available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Price 75 cents. (Note: Please do not write to USDA for this as it is For Sale Only through GPO).

## A LIVING CHRISTMAS TREE

### ---Why Not?

The joy of this Christmas may last "forever" if you join the ecology-minded families who are thinking about a living Christmas tree this year. Be sure, first, that you have space on your grounds to accomodate a growing tree of the kind you select.

Some of the more popular living Christmas trees are Scotch pine, Douglas fir, balsam fir, blue spruce, black spruce, and Eastern red cedar. Be sure you have the recommendations from local nursery for varieties in your area and, remember, that proper handling is important for your tree to survive.

Buy a tree that is balled-in-burlap...one that is not too big, or too heavy to handle. If possible, dig the hole long before Christmas (when the ground is easier to dig) and make sure it is big enough! You may want to line the hole with straw, or other insulation to keep it from freezing.

Move the tree indoors gradually -- from garage to porch to basement and finally to room where it will be trimmed. Don't plan to keep it inside for more than a week. Don't put it near heat outlets of any kind, and keep it away from direct sunlight. Use small lights (big lights might damage your tree). Water it, but only enough to keep the rootball from drying. Too much water may encourage new growth which would suffer winter damage when moved outdoors. Move it outside gradually -- a warm day is best. Get instructions on planning from your county agricultural agent or local nurseryman.



NOTE: Additional information for the MEDIA and photographs (when applicable) may be obtained from: Shirley Wagener, Editor of Food and Home Notes, Room 535-A, Office of Communication/Press Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Or telephone 202-447-5898